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Guru-Granth Sahib
[ENGLISH VERSION]

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Guru-Granth Sahib
[ENGLISH VERSION]

VOL. II

Translated and Annotated by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|--------|
| THE ESSENTIALS OF SIKHISM · <i>By S. Kapur Singh, M.A (Cantab)</i> | 1-xvii |
| RAG ASA | 337 |
| <i>Ashtrapadis</i> | 408 |
| <i>Biharas</i> | 427 |
| <i>Var of Rag Asa, M. 1</i> | 456 |
| <i>The Word of the Bhaktas</i> | 469 |
| RAG GUJRI | 484 |
| <i>Ashtrapadis</i> | 496 |
| <i>Var of Rag Gujri, M. 3</i> | 509 |
| <i>Var of Rag Gujri, M. 5</i> | 508 |
| <i>The Word of the Bhaktas</i> | 515 |
| RAG DEVGANDHARI | 518 |
| RAG BIHAGARA | 528 |
| <i>Var of Rag Bihagara, M. 4</i> | 536 |
| RAG VADHANS | 545 |
| <i>Ashtrapadis</i> | 551 |
| <i>Ghoris</i> | 559 |
| <i>Alaahnis</i> | 563 |
| <i>Var of Rag Vadhans, M. 4</i> | 568 |
| RAG SORATHI | 577 |
| <i>Ashtrapadis</i> | 612 |
| <i>Var of Rag Sorath, M. 4</i> | 618 |
| <i>The Word of the Bhaktas</i> | 629 |

The Essentials of Sikhism

Religion deals essentially with three subjects: of the nature of reality, the nature of man and its relation to this reality, and lastly with the way to reach this reality. The first two subjects belong to philosophy proper and it is the third subject which brings the other two also into the domain of religion. As long as religion merely defines the nature of reality and seeks to lay down the true values of human activity, it is no more than philosophy and ethics, but when it seeks and promises to help human soul to take these truths to heart and to put them into action with the object of resolving the problem of suffering, which is inherent in the innermost core of man, the self-consciousness, then it becomes religion proper. Man can, possibly, keep his mind away from the intellectual problems of the mystery of universe, the nature of his own self and that of the world around him and the nature of the relationship that binds both, but he cannot help yearning and suffering. As Pascal has said, "Man is the only wretched creature that there is", and a religion which did not whole-heartedly tackle this problem would ring hollow. In this sense, Buddhism was eminently right when it declared that the basic problem, demanding resolution of religion is "samb dukkha", i.e., that all individuated conscious existence entails suffering, which means that suffering inheres in the very nature of the human individuality.

Sikhism is essentially a Religion of the Way, i.e., something that must be lived and experienced rather than something which may be intellectually grasped and comprehended. True, there can be no practice without the doctrine. Sikhism, therefore, has its doctrines, its view of reality, its view of the nature of man, and their inter-relationship, but it lays primary stress on the practice, the discipline, "the way which leads to the cessation of suffering," as Gautam, the Buddha, had formulated it.

A careful reading and understanding of the contents of the Sikh Scripture shows that the religion of Sikhism has three postulates implicit in its teachings. One, that there is no essential duality between the spirit and the matter¹. Two, that man alone has the capacity to enter into conscious participation in the process of the evolution, which further implicates that the process of evolution, as understood by the modern man, has come to a dead-end and it, therefore, must be rescued by the conscious effort of man who alone is capable now of furthering this process². Three, that when the man reaches the highest goal of evolution, namely, the vision of God, he must not be absorbed back into God of voidness but must remain earth-conscious so as to transform this mundane world into a higher and spiritual mode of existence. *Brahmgyani paropkar omala*³.

The first of these propositions is a postulate of philosophy though, in the context of philosophic speculations of the world, it is startling enough. The view taken by Sikhism on this point is that the spirit and the matter are not antagonistic to each other, the one subtle, the other gross, and that the core of the human nature, which is self-conscious, and the physical nature, are accountable ultimately in terms of the subtle. The mathematico-physical aspect of the universe is as real as its subtle aspect is, though to a mode of consciousness which is pinpointed and individuated, they appear to be poles apart. A true comprehension, however, which results from the religious discipline of sublimating and integrating the human faculties, removes this basic duality between the mind and the matter. "When I saw truly, I knew that all was primeval. Nanak: the subtle and the gross are in fact identical⁴." This assertion is repeated in the Sikh Scripture again and again in exegesis of the basic formula of Sikhism given as the opening line of the Sikh Scripture, in which it is postulated that, "the Primary is true, the pre-Temporal is true, the Phenomena is true, and also the yet-to-be-evolved is true⁵." This view of reality, which the Sikhism postulates, has far-reaching implications, both in respect of the traditional Hindu philosophy, and the problem of the true conduct for man. Firstly, it, in essence, repudiates the basic concept of Hindu thought embodied in the doctrine of *Maya*, which is postulated as the illusory power which createth appearances and ignorance. True, the subtle Hindu mind characterises it as *anirvachnitya*, "unsayable, whether is, or is-not," "real, yet not-real,"

1. *Sargun ap, nirgun bhai ohi*.—*Sukhmani, V.*

2. *Kal Janam bhale kit potanga*.—*Mil Jugdis, milan ki barla*.—*Gauri, V*

3. *Sukhmani V.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Japu, I.*

but it definitely is a veiling, obscuring Power of nature, and an agent of error and illusion, accountable for the manifestation of all phenomena. In Sikhism, the term *Afaya*, is retained but it is interpreted otherwise so as to make it not a category of existence, but a characteristic of a stage and plane in the involution of the spirit. The result of this re-interpretation is replete with tremendous consequences for the practical outlook of man. The world of phenomena is no longer a dream and a phantasmagoria in the minds of the gods, to be by-passed and shunned. It is as real, in fact, as the Ultimate Reality, but the perceiving human mind is beset with limitations that must be transcended and cut asunder before it can be seen thus. It is this that has made it possible for Sikhism to lay down that the highest religious discipline must be practised while remaining active in the socio-political context, and not by giving up and renouncing the worldly life. It is this which has given the Sikh mind a sense of urgency, and imparted to it a genuine strain of extroversion which the Western mind has achieved only through adopting basically different postulates, such as, that this one life on earth is the only life a soul may look forward to till the end of time, and that the essence of the real is its characteristic of being the object of sensory-motor perception. It is the peculiar virtue of Sikhism that while it retains the primacy of the spirit over the matter, it prevents human life degenerating into the purely secular, utilitarian and expedient modes of activity. It is a further virtue of this postulate of Sikh religion that it lends the necessary sense of urgency to the mind of man, and imparts to it an extrovert motivation, in so far as it is essential to retain them for human welfare, material prosperity and spiritual advancement on this earth.

The second postulate inherent in the teachings of Sikhism is, that the blind urge of evolution, after reaching the point of creating the self-conscious man, has come to a dead-end and by itself now it is incapable of making any further progress, unless the self-consciousness, in which is grounded the will of man, now takes a consciously guided and directed part to goad the evolutionary urge and guide it. "Hail the Guru, for, he teaches and aids the ascent of man over himself." This line of thought, in various forms, runs throughout the voluminous Sikh Scripture, and it is legitimate to say that the concept of the 'superman', which agitated the mind of Nietzsche during the 19th century in Europe, and from whom the modern Indian thinker, Aurovindo Ghose, has taken his cue, is first of all and truly adumbrated in the Sikh Scripture; and that the conscious effort of man alone is at this stage, capable of furthering the process of evolution that has gone so far to make and shape the material and human world, is now more or less accepted by the thinking modern minds.

But by far the most startling postulate of Sikhism is that the true end of man is not such a vision of God which culminates in re-absorption of the individual into the absolute reality, but the emergence of a race of God-conscious men, who remain earth-aware and thus operate in the mundane world of the phenomena, with the object of transforming and spiritualizing it into a higher and more abundant plane of existence. "The God-conscious man is animated with an intense desire to do good in this world." In the past, the aim of the highest religious discipline was taken and accepted as the attainment of identity with or propinquity to God. It was not thought in terms of utilising the God-consciousness for transforming and spiritualising the life on earth, and the humanity. It is this revolutionary postulate of Sikhism which is the true prototype of the sophisticated philosophy of the modern Hindu sage, Aurovindo Ghose, though there is no concrete evidence to suggest that he is directly indebted to the Sikh thought. Those, however, who know how basic and revolutionary postulates of this kind are capable of influencing men and minds, far separated by distance and time from the original epiphany of the doctrine, may perceive no difficulty in seeing the connection between the two. In this connection, it is interesting to recall that not long ago, when Ramakrishna, *Paramhansa*, the modern Hindu savant, was at his most critical stage of the theophanic development, it was a Sikh ascetic, *Udasi* Totapuri, who imparted to the *Paramhansa* the Sikh esoteric instruction efficacious for removing impediments on the spiritual path, and that is why the most illustrious *Chela* of the *Paramhansa*, Swami Vivekanand, so often uttered and introduced into his writings, the Sikh mystic formula, *Vaheguru*. Again, the Maratha upsurge of the 18th century, the pride and symbol of the political consciousness and self-respect of the modern Hindu nationalism, is admitted as having been directly inspired and nourished by the teachings of Ramdas *Samarth*, the spiritual guide of the great Sivaji, and it is a true though obscure fact of history that Ramdas *Samarth* is directly indebted to the Sikh teachings as imparted to him

when he met the Sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind, in Kashmir, in 1634. As the Gurumukhi manuscript (Khalsa College Library, Amritsar 1780 circa), *Pothi Punjab Sahjan* accounts, the Guru taught the Maratha saint that the Essence of Sikhism is to be an ascetic within and secular without, for Guru Nanak taught mankind to transcend the little ego and the appearances and not to renounce the world, whereupon the Maratha saint exclaimed: "This appeals to my mind!" The inspirer and preceptor of the founder of the Arya Samaj, Vrijaanand, a high-caste Brahmin, native of Kartarpur in the Punjab, had before settling down at Banaras as a Veda learned man, imbibed the Sikh declaration that "unless the mankind pays heed to that which is true essence of all *Veda*, namely, the doctrine of the Name, they shall remain confused and misdirected". Be that as it may the effects of the seminal ideas of Sikhism can be shown to have moulded and shaped the entire history of modern India.

What is the discipline, and the practice which Sikhism recommends as necessary and efficacious for attaining this God-consciousness, and for yoking it to the evolutionary urge for transformation of life and humanity on this earth, and on the plane of mundane existence? It is the doctrine and practice of the Name. "In the age through which humanity is passing now, no other practice but that of the Name is efficacious. Therefore, practise the discipline of Name". This message is repeated again and again in the Sikh Scripture "O, my soul, there is no help but in the Name, other ways and practices are not so sure!"

Now, what is this 'discipline of the Name' which Sikhism teaches as the essence of the religion for mankind in the present Age?

In the history of religion, broadly speaking, five paths have been recognised as efficacious for leading to liberation, *i. e.*, for achievement of the *summum bonum* of religion. (1) disinterested action, known as the *Karma-yoga* in Hindu religious thought; (2) devotion, known as *Bhakti*; (3) gnosis, the *Jnan*, (4) the ritual, known as *Yajna*; and (5) asceticism, maceration or *tapas*. This fifth and the last path to liberation is a typical Indian contribution to the history of religious practices. All the other four have been, more or less, universally accepted in some form or other, with varying degrees of stress on each, as valid paths to liberation. In the Sikh Scripture, the first three are variously mentioned and subsumed under the inclusive title, 'the discipline of the Name'. No logically systematic account of the theory or practice of the Name is given in the Sikh Scripture, however, for the idiom of the writings itself forbids such an approach, but throughout its voluminous pages it is stressed again and again with a wealth of metaphor and imagery, illustrative material and exposition, that, at the present stage of mankind the discipline of the Name is the only suitable and efficacious practice for leading to the vision of God and for achieving the unitive experience of the Numenon. The discipline of *Bhakti* and discipline of *Karma*, the disinterested works, is also mentioned variously, commended and praised but throughout it is tacitly assumed that it is a part and parcel of the generic discipline, "the practice of the Name". "The limitation and the sickness in the soul of man can be removed only by mercenising it with the chemical of the Name". "The vision of God is not easier to have by any other endeavour than that of the Name and man engages in this effort only by good fortune, for all the other disciplines and practices pale into insignificance before the practice of the Name". It is asserted that the true knowledge is a fruit of 'the practice of the Name' and that devotion, *Bhakti*, is a corollary of the discipline of the Name. It is further said that disinterested action, the practice of *Karmayoga*, is a natural disposition and propensity of the man in whom the discipline of the Name is opened. *Prabhu lau samarahi se paropkari*.*

It is clear, therefore, that Sikhism teaches a religious discipline which is in essence a practice which includes the techniques of *Yoga*, the psychological and spiritual integration, the technique of *Bhakti*, the supreme training of the emotions in the service of one supreme end, and a socio-politically active life, motivated not by the little ego of the individual but by an individual self which is yoked to the universal Self.

The technique of *Yoga* has aroused a great deal of interest in the West, and in the whole of the modern world during the recent years, but mostly as a technique for achieving mental poise and physical health, though this is not the true purpose of the science of *Yoga* as originally conceived. The concept of *Yoga*, though not the

1. ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ॥

6. *Gauri Sukhmani, V.*

2. *Ramkali, Anand III.*

7. *Sukhmani, V.*

3. *Ass, I.*

8. *Gauri: Thuli, V.*

4. *Gauri, V.*

9. *Sukhmani, V.*

5. *Japu, I.*

term, is as old as the Rig Veda itself. That the Vedic material is complex is recognised in the *Nirukta* itself which takes account of several methods of its exegesis. In recent times, particularly by Western scholars of archaeology, it has been suggested that Vedic material is primarily historical events transmuted into myth. It is said by others that it consists of poetic exordium to the Brahmanic ritual. There is then a theory, recently revived by Sri Aurovindo Ghose, that the Veda is a vast piece of symbolism representing the passions of the soul and its striving for highest spiritual realms, a concept which he himself has adopted as the prototype of his great poem, the *Savitri*. Again, Bergaigne suggested the theory that all mythological portrayals in the Veda are variants of the sacred fire and the sacrificial liquor, the *soma*¹. Whatever may be said about this last as a general theory of interpretation of the Vedas, it has the merit of suggesting a method which appears to be plausible, for, obscure Vedic texts assume some kind of coherence in general if in them we seek an attempt at portraying correspondences between the world of men, the performers of the *yajna*, and the immaterial ethereal world of the gods, in short the microcosm and the macrocosm. The primary function of the *rishis*, the revealers and preservers of the Veda, was to ensure the ordered functioning of the mundane world, and of the religious ritual, by reproducing the succession of cosmic events, in their ritual and in the imagery which that ritual embodies, and this is the true meaning that the Vedic ritual signified. The term, *rita*, the basic concept of Vedic imagery, is a designation of the cosmic order which sustains the human order, the social ethics and the social coherence. Terms such as *dharma*, *kratu*, have a two-fold significance according to whether they refer to men or the gods, to the plane of the *adhivatanam* or the *adhidaitanam*, as the Upanishads point out. Thus understood, the Veda portrays the cosmic magical synthesis, symbolically expressed. The cosmic order is conceived as a vast *yajna*, the prototype of the *yajna* which the men must perform so as to ensure the integration of the two. Thus, Vedism is already a form of collective, communist *Yoga* in which the gods and men both play their parts as witnesses and participants. It is this strain of thought which accounts for the yearning of the Hindu mind that constantly seeks hidden correspondences between things which belong to entirely different conceptual systems. The science and the technique of *Yoga*, as it has been developed in India for thousands of years, is thus as old as the Hindu thought itself. The term comes from the Sanskrit root, *yaj*, which means 'to yoke, or join together'. As the specific science of spiritual discipline, it is intended to signify the union of the individual self with the universal Self, the vision of God or the absorption into God. As an art, the technique of *Yoga* has been used, since the beginning of Hindu historical times, as the archaeological discoveries recently made in the Indus valley Mohenjodaro show, where a big tank surrounded by unventilated cubicles, designed to ensure deoxygenation calculated to alter body chemistry facilitative of introversion, has been unearthed, lending support to the speculation that, already in the *pre-Christian* before the dawn of the Christian Era, the art and practice of *Yoga* was well-developed and well-established. Its techniques and teachings have been accumulated through a continuous stream of adepts who have handed them down from generation to generation. Patanjali, a Hindu savant of the 4th century B.C., is the author of the text, *Yogasutra*, which is now the most ancient text extant on the science of *Yoga*, though its opening *sutra* says, "Now, a revised text of *Yoga*", which makes it clear that this text is, by no means, the first of its kind. The philosophical basis of this system of *Yoga*, as expounded by Patanjali, is the *Sankhya*, which teaches that the world order is risen and is an expansion of the highest kind of Intelligence, the *Nahat*, that there is no part without an assignable function, a value, a purpose; that there is always an exact selection of means for the production of definite ends; that there is never a random aggregation of events, that there is order, regulation and system. It postulates two ultimate realities, the Spirit and the Matter, the *Purusha* and the *Prakriti*, to account for all experience, as logical principles out of which all things evolve. The fundamental tenet of the *Sankhya* is that creation is impossible, for something cannot come out of nothing, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, and that the real movement therefore only consists of modification. This is the central doctrine of the *Sankhya*, and is called, *sattva-yoga*, (*Sankhya Karika*, 9) and its whole system evolves from this as its logical ground. The *Sankhya* divides this process of cosmic modification into 25 categories of mind and matter and shows how the whole phenomena has evolved out of these two sources in accordance with these categories. The philosophy of orthodox *Yoga* postulates that what is true of this macrocosm is also true of the human microcosm and that, as the individual soul has inviolated, through a set process, out of the universal Spirit, it can, by the

1 A. Bergaigne, *La religion Vedique*, 3 Vols Paris, 1878.

reverse process, evolute into the universal Spirit. The *Yoga* assumes that the individual soul is the part and parcel of the universal Substance, but so involved in the context of Time and Space as to have lost all recognition of its true nature. The *Yoga* sets forth a know-how and a technique to bring the individual back to his own and original position, to absolve him from the clutches of matter and to return him to the essence from which he came, and thus to abstract him from every aspect of Time and Space.

Since Sikhism abolishes the duality of mind and matter, it, by implication, refuses to base the philosophy of its discipline of the Name on the orthodox categories of the *San'lyha*. The Sikh doctrine of the Name does not assume the traditional cosmological theory as set forth in the *San'lyha* system but it does assert that the basic sickness of the human soul arises out of its individuation, its involution and descent from the universal Spirit, and that the cure and health lies in a process of evolution towards its primal source, which is God⁴. For this it recommends a psychological technique, the first step and ingredient of which is the mechanical repetition of the Name of God accompanied by a constant and unceasing effort to empty the individual mind of all its sensory and ideational contents, conscious as well as sub-conscious⁵. Since Sikhism recommends that religion must be lived and practised in the socio-political context, it has modelled this practice of the *Yoga* of the Name so as to make it possible and practicable for a person to pursue this discipline simultaneously while engaged in earning honest livelihood. The complicated technique of *Yoga*, as laid down in the text of Patanjali, and the philosophical concepts by which it is validated, both go together, and the earning of livelihood and this practice of the *Yoga* as it is explicitly laid down, cannot go together. In Sikhism, this predicament has been transcended by evolving a technique which is at once practicable and efficacious. This practice of the Name is mechanical to start with, but has its dynamic adjuncts, without which it cannot succeed. The first adjunct is the ethical life. The Sikh Scripture lays constant stress on it that unless a man leads an ethical life he cannot come nigh unto God, although Sikhism does not confuse the ethical commandment and value with the religious experience and value as such. A Sikh, engaged in the discipline of Name, himself must lead a life of the highest ethical purity, in word, thought and deed, and every faltering from this path of rectitude constitutes a stumbling block in the path of his ultimate realisation of God. "A man of religion must be wholly motivated by ethical rules of conduct". He is bidden to rely upon prayer and the company of holy men to support and sustain him in his life of ethical rectitude. As he progresses in the path of spiritual realisation, he must deem it as his duty to persuade and help others to tread the same path through socio-political activity which must be progressively purified of all taints of selfishness. This is the doctrine of '*Seva*' of Sikhism, without which, the Sikhism declares, the practice of Name does not fructify.

It is further laid down in the Sikh Scripture that the discipline of Name must be constantly vitalised by *Bhakti*, devotion to God. "Increase your devotion to God in an ever-ascending measure so that your mind may be wholly purified". The word, *Bhakti*, has the literal meaning of, 'well-joined'. The word, *bhakti*, occurs in the *Stretasvetara*, the ancient Hindu text, which Otto Schrader in his *Der Hinduismus* (Tubingen, 1930, p. 1) calls, "the gate-way to Hinduism", although the earlier, Panini, in his *Grammar*, also appears to refer to it (IV. iii. 95-98). It was the *Bhakti* principle which brought about the transition from the neuter, to the personal principle in Hindu religious speculation. Since *Bhakti* is 'joining with' or 'participation' in the God, it presupposes an object distinct from the subject. A purely monistic environment, such as the Sikh doctrine projects, is not a very fertile ground for *Bhakti*. *Bhakti*, therefore, has always been better adapted to a *Vaisnavite* background wherein a personal God is postulated as assuming human and sub-human forms in the phenomenal world. The orthodox Hindu theory of *Bhakti* is that, a God without attributes is inaccessible, and that, there must be an intercessor. Since Hinduism has no founder or prophet God-incarnate, the 'Word made flesh', as the Christians say, this intermediary must be one of the human or sub-human forms of Vishnu, which he has assumed in various Time-cycles of the Creation. This is the basic doctrine of Hindu *Bhakti*, though gradually it has acquired many shades of secondary meanings. Since Sikhism does not countenance *avatarad*, the doctrine of incarnation of gods or the God, it uses the term, *Bhakti*, in its pristine sense of canalizing and sublimating the whole emotive energy of the individual to sustain the continuous yearning for a vision of God⁶. This form of *Bhakti*, the Sikh Scripture

1. *Nijghar mahil pavaho sakh sahjje*.—*Gauri*, V.

2. "*Ram, Ram, sabhko kahai, kahai Ram na koe.*"

3. *Sukhmani*, V, 4-24

4. *Sukhmani*, V.

Gurprasad nam man vasoi, tan phal pavai koe—*Gauri*, III.

5. *Miqh, Arpac*, III

declares, is a necessary adjunct of the discipline of Name. *Gur man mario kar sanjog, ahinis ravai bhazai jogi*.

The last adjunct of the discipline of Name, the Sikh Scripture says, is the intuitive understanding of the philosophical truths which underlie the world of phenomena.

This is the true knowledge, the gnosis, and the Sikh Scripture commends that a Sikh must always strive by study, by discussion, by meditation and by every mental effort, to acquire an intellectual and intuitive understanding of the scientific and philosophic truths¹.

This, in short outline, is the discipline of the Name which Sikhism teaches as the path to the realisation of the God, and, broadly speaking, it consists of a synthesis of the three well-known paths to liberation recognised in the religions of the mankind, namely, the path of dis-interested action, the path of devotion, and the path of knowledge, all subsumed under and practised as adjuncts to the grand discipline of the psychological technique of the *Namajyog*. The modern Hindu thinker, Aurovindo Ghose, in his own way, has tried to expound something similar under the title of 'Integral Yoga', though it is definitely something less but expressed in a more sophisticated and modern literary style.

It is, therefore, this discipline of the Name through which Sikhism seeks not only to ensure the continuous renewal but a firm conservancy of the fundamental traditions of the great religions of the mankind and, in addition, it thereby seeks to discover new experiences so as to apply them for the purpose of a new integration of human personality, such as would transform the man and his destiny on this earth.

Out of the five paths to liberation, generally followed by mankind, the two, namely, the ritual and the maceration, have not been recommended and approved of by Sikhism, for obvious reasons. The ritual, in its original essence, is magic and its nature and function is different from that of true religion as conceived by Sikhism. Magic seeks to control powers of nature directly through the force of spells and enchantments, while religion recognises existence of spiritual beings external to man and the world and employs persuasive methods of sacrifice and prayer to procure their aid. Magic is coercive and dictatorial in approach while the other is persuasive. Magic depends upon the way in which certain things are said and done for a particular purpose by those who possess the necessary technique and the power to put the supernatural forces into effect, while religion is personal and supplicatory. It is for this reason that the path of the ritual and the *gyajna* has been discountenanced by Sikhism.

Asceticism and maceration have been like-wise dis-owned as desirable paths to liberation², for, these practices necessarily implicate withdrawal from socio-political activity, and Sikhism firmly discourages such a withdrawal in view of its basic doctrines which envisage an ultimate transformation of the man and his destiny on this mundane earth as the fruit of the religion. A true religious, therefore, must not macerate and "burn away" his physical frame through excessive *tapas*, but must keep it in disciplined health. "Nanak says, the proper course for man is to seek communion with God by keeping his corporeal frame disciplined and fit."³

The order of the Khalsa, which the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, founded, must be viewed in the background of these doctrines of Sikhism, as intended to be a body of men who not only practise the essential spiritual discipline of Sikhism in the sense explained above, but who are also pledged to ensure, by every legitimate means, the coming into existence, the expansion, and the preservation of a world Society, vitalised continuously by the afflation of the truths of religion, which religion is a fluence of all the best traditions of mankind and which religion sustains a world culture in which all traditions of all races of mankind, such as are consistent with the spiritual dignity and the spiritual goal of man, can participate on equal terms.

1. *Rasam, I*

2. *Akan karkala vadibhagla, tu gian ratan samol—Cawli, Arpadli, IV*

3. *Yajna, hom, yama, tap, puja, dehi dukhi nir dukk sahai—Bhatav, I*

4. *Gujri, I.*

II

THE SIKH THOUGHT

The basic problems of Sikh thought are naturally the same as those of other world religions, and as may be expected, their treatment by Sikhism is, in the main, on the lines of the Hindu and Buddhist speculative thought. Wherever Sikhism differs or departs from these lines of thought, it does so, as a rule, not by introducing new terms or concepts but by underlining an already familiar concept or by amplifying or interpreting it otherwise. This is, as it should be, for, thus alone it is possible to effect a genuine new advance or expansion in the cultural and religious horizon of mankind and it is thus that all great cultures and civilizations have emerged and developed.

THE UNIVERSE

We have already said that, in Sikh thought, the final duality between the matter and the spirit is denied. The basic Sikh thought is strictly monistic—"From One the Many emanate and finally into the One the Many submerge." All that exists, whether in the form of phenomena and appearances, or as numenon and reality, is, in ultimate comprehension, the Spirit and the mind. The individual mind, the numerous forms of life, and the inanimate matter are all Spirit in different modes. Out of the own initiative of the Spirit a process of involutions occurred for some limited purpose, the precise nature of which is beyond human comprehension. The creation of the universe in its initial form, which the modern theorists, such as Abbe Lamatre (1904—) call, the Primaeval Atom, resulted from the involutory impulse of God. In this Primaeval Atom was originally concentrated, in a super-dense state, that which expanded and disintegrated, through an antithetical evolutionary impulse, for thousands of millions of years, finally into the universe as it is today. This evolutionary impulse, whereby the Primaeval Atom has issued into the innumerable forms constituting the universe, has reached its highest point, up-to-date, in the creation of man, and man, therefore, is the point in creation from where the inverse movement of evolution may take a further leap towards the Spirit. These two processes of involution and evolution constitute a double but simultaneous movement and thus creation of the universe is an involution-cum-evolution process, a descent and an ascent. The universe, thus, is nothing but God in becoming. "The formless has become all the innumerable forms, Himself. He that is beyond the attributes is identical with all that in which attributes inhere. Nanak declares the doctrine of the One Being, that is Becoming, for, the One indeed is the Many¹."

The main doctrines of Sikh theology are grounded in this view of the Ultimate Reality and its nature.

GENESIS

With regard to the coming into being of the Primaeval Atom, the Sikh doctrine is that the process was instantaneous, caused by the Will of God. "The forms become in consequence of the Divine Will. Comprehension fails at this stage of understanding the Divine Will". After thus stating this beginning of the Becoming, the further statements made in the Sikh Scripture about the creation and evolution of the universe are remarkably akin to the picture which has now been adumbrated by modern speculation after taking into account the data revealed by the recent advances in observational Astronomy. One of the basic hymns in the Sikh Scripture, which may be called the Hymn of the Genesis, says,

"For thousands and thousands of ages and for millions and millions of aeons, there was nothing in the beginning but nebulous density.

Neither solids, nor spaces were there, only the Divine Impulse made become.

Neither the day nor night, neither galaxies and solar systems nor satellites, but only God, self-absorbed. The atmospheres, the imprints waters, the pre-conditions of all forms of life,

1. *Majh, V.* 2. *Gauri, Bawanakhr, V.* 3. *Japu, I.*

[VIII]

And the sound, the protyle of all becoming, they too were not there.
 There were no higher planes, middle regions or lower spaces, for, the Space as yet was not there; and
 there was no all-consuming Time either.
 When God Willed, He created the universes.
 The expanse was caused without a formal cause.
 None knoweth His limits or limitlessness.
 The True Teacher revealeth this secret!"

MAN

The man being the highest yet point in the process of creation, on the phenomenal plane, where the evolutionary impulse has apparently near-exhausted its initial momentum, it is man on whom now the responsibility rests for consciously revitalising this impulse for a further evolutionary leap. "Thou art the very essence of God. Therefore, know thyself as such." "The human body is the resting point of the process of creation and it is from here that the further upward movement towards the God-realisation starts. Therefore, now make an all-out effort to reach the Goal and do not waste human life in frivolities!" It is the involution-cum-evolution which is responsible for the creation of the universe, and which after reaching the point of human consciousness has reached a stasis and the man is thus a voluntary diminution of the infinitude of God, for some obscure but limited purpose, as, indeed all forms of existence represent a diminution of God. Since God is truth, knowledge, bliss, light, harmony and immortality, the involuted forms of creation are, so much less of all these. Man being the stage at which the evolution has emerged into self-consciousness, man is capable of knowing that he has reached a particular stage of the creative process, and he is capable, volitionally, of taking steps to evolve upwards to the next stage. This is the stage of the *Brahmajnani*, or the God-conscious man, and it is to this stage of evolution, a vague and distorted premonition of which finds expression in the later 18th and early 19th century West European literature in the form of the concept of the Superman. "Lo, I preach to you the Superman; Superman is the meaning of the earth," said Nietzsche. Again, "Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman... What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal". Sikhism agrees with this except that Sikhism declares that the meaning of the earth reaches far beyond the stage of this 'Superman' and Superman as conceived thus is not only an inadequate and distorted concept, but is merely an interim stage. Sikhism endorses Nietzsche that the sphere of the activity of the Superman, and of the higher still stages of the evolution, is the earth, in the sense that it is on this earth, and other similar terrestrial spheres that a perfect human society of God-conscious men, of psycho-social perfection, is the ultimate objective of the impulse of God which has originally given rise to the process of creation. In contra-distinction to all those and previous philosophies and religions, which taught that the ultimate goal of man was either absorption into God or entry into a supra-mundane Kingdom of God, wherein there is abiding propinquity to God, Sikhism urges man to divinise the whole of humanity on this earth by transforming mind, life and matter, through a conscious effort and will and with the aid of the spiritual technique of the *Namgyos*, which is capable of transforming the mental, vital and material stuff, of which the man is made, into a subtler, finer and nobler substance capable of taking along the whole being to a level of existence, undreamed of before, where pure knowledge, full harmony and divine bliss would prevail. This, indeed, would be a Society of gods, and the ultimate purpose of the divine impulse of creation is the establishment of this Society of human gods in the terrestrial spheres of the universe. It is the teachings of the Sikh Gurus that the supreme duty of man is to make an all-out effort towards this divine goal, and the Sikh Gurus not only point out this goal but also reveal the way towards it. "Hail, the Guru, a hundred thousands times, hail, for, he reveals the secret of emergent transformation of man into gods".

GOD

The Sikh concept of the ultimate Reality is more akin to the Judaic notion of an Almighty Person than to the Aryan concept of an immanent neutral Principle. The basic formula of Sikh theology is the opening line

1. *Atara, Schille, I, 3-13* 2. *Man ta jotsrup hal, apna mul pachhan—Asa, III* 3. *Asa, V.*
 4. *Thus spoke Zarathustra, I, 4* 5. *Var Asa, I*

of the Sikh Scripture which characterises the ultimate Reality as follows

"1, Being-Becoming, Truth, Numenon, Creator, Person, Non-thesis, Non-antithesis, Beyond Times, Form, Unborn, Self-expression, Light, Gracious."

MAYA

The doctrine of Maya has been basic to the Hindu and Buddhist speculation from the very beginning. The best known work, apart from the omniscient, *Mahabharata*, in which the term, *Maya* (relative truth), is employed as a philosophical concept, is the metrical treatise, *Karika*, by Gaudpad, wherein, unlike the *Mahabharata* (Bhagavadgita, XVIII, 61) the term is not taken for granted but is explained and defined. Since the proper name of Gaudpad was borne by the teacher of the famous philosopher of Hindu monism, Shankara, the author of the *Karika* may be the same person who might have lived at the end of the 7th century. This work, *Karika*, is usually printed with the *Mandukya Upanishad*, and for practical purposes, is regarded a part of it. In language and thought, both, it bears a remarkable resemblance to Buddhist writings of the *Madhyamik* School, and the criticism of the Hindu orthodoxy that 'the monism of Shankara, in which the doctrine of *Maya* is embedded, is, in reality, crypto-Buddhism', is not without substance. In the *Karika*, the world of appearances is compared to the apparent circle of fire produced by whirling lighted torch. This striking image first occurs in the *Mastrayana Upanishda* (vi. 24). It also occurs in the Buddhist Mahayan scripture, the *Lankastaravata*, which purports to be an account of the revelation of the true Religion by Gautama, the Buddha, when he visited Ceylon and there gave discourses to the King of the island, Ravana, and his wife, Mahamati. This text represents a well-matured phase of speculation in Buddhism, as it criticises the Hindu school of philosophy of the Sankhaya, Pashupat, as well as other schools. It includes a prophecy about the birth of Nagarjuna, the great Buddhist savant of the 4th century A.D., and it mentions the advent of Guptas which marks the renaissance of Hinduism in India. It also alludes to the fresh incursions of the Hunas into northern India, which incursions destroyed the Imperial Gupta dynasty at the end of the 6th century A.D. Throughout the Hindu speculative and religious literature, ever since, this doctrine of *Maya* is admitted as, in some way, an independent principle of the process of creation. True, the subtle Sankra asserts that the principle of *Maya* is *anirvachaniya*, that is, it can neither be said to exist nor not to exist. A is neither A, nor not-A. Whatever else this statement may mean, it does implicate that *Maya* has a positive existence. Sikhism denies the doctrine of *Maya*, thus conceived. As ignorance and nescience have no positive existence, they merely being the aspects of the self-limited involuted Spirit, likewise, *Maya*, as such, has no positive existence. It is merely a way of saying that the individual consciousness perceives the reality only in the form of partial knowledge, which is so on account of the process of involution. As the darkness is merely a negative aspect of the light of the Sun, similar is the case with ignorance and nescience.

"What is there positive to which we can give the name of *Maya*? What positive activity the *Maya* is capable of? The human soul is subject to the pleasure and pain principle in its very nature as long as it operates on the individuated plane of consciousness"

This interpretation of the concept of *Maya* in Sikh theology has far-reaching consequences in so far as it pulls the Hindu mind out of the slough of much indolent introspective pre-occupation and subjectivism, generated by the belief that the whole world of the appearances in which man is born to pursue his socio-political life, is no more real than a phantasmagoria in the minds of the gods above. By giving a foundation of solid reality to the world of appearances, this re-interpretation of the concept of *Maya* confers a sense of reality, a feeling of urgency and an objectivity to the whole frame of mind, which is necessary for the all-out effort to speed up the evolutionary process, through the human will, and this is the core of the precepts of Sikhism, as a way of life.

ETHICS

The fact that religious experience, *per se*, is non-moral, has been known to Hindu thought from the very beginning. In the West, it has been recognised clearly only in recent times. It was Dr. Otto who in his *Idea of*

1. *Maya-vadam anuchhasttram, prachhannam Buddham—(Vaisnava) Padam-purana*

2 *Sring, Astpadi, III.*

the Holy, about a quarter of a century ago, made this point finally clear. In the Judaic religious tradition, for all practical purposes, religious life and ethical conduct appear to have been identified. The ten commandments of Moses are ethical precepts. In the Koran, it is these ethical commands which are presented as the essence of religion. Western scholars are sometimes shocked at the stories narrated and adored in the ancient Hindu texts, of the deeds of gods which do not conform with strict ethical standards and about which the narrator of the story expresses no moral horror and passes no censorial judgment. From this, the Western reader erroneously concludes that, ethics has no place in the Hindu religious practice and tradition. This is far from the truth. From the very beginning, in the Hindu thought and tradition it has been recognised that ethical conduct is the very foundation on which the life of a religious must be based. The rules of conduct of the Buddhist *śramans*, the formulary of conduct of the Jain *dhikshus*, the daily rules made obligatory for a Brahmin in almost all basic Hindu texts, bear ample testimony to the fact that the relation of ethics to religion has always been considered as intimate by the Hindus. It is true that the Hindu thought recognises that the man of highest religious experience is, like the Superman of Nietzsche, beyond good and evil, but that is not to say that in Hindu tradition the ethical values have no place in religious life. In Sikhism, while it is recognised that the highest religious experience is unmoral and belongs to a category of value which is not ethical, it is nevertheless stressed that without strict ethical purity of conduct there is no possibility of any advance in the religious experience. A religious life, not strictly grounded in ethical conduct, or a religious discipline which ignores the ethical requirements, is considered in Sikhism a great error. "The seed of the testament of the Guru cannot germinate except in the field of ethical conduct, constantly irrigated by the waters of truth". "A man of religion is ever characterised by ethical deeds, honest living, sincerity of heart, and a fearless passion for truth". "Nanak maketh this public declaration, let all men ponder over it. Ethical conduct is the only true foundation of human life on earth". Sikhism, thus, lays a stress on morality which raises the moral law to a high status which was not generally countenanced by the Hindus and Buddhists. The Buddhist and Brahmanic systems appear to assume tacitly that morality is a means to felicity and it is not obedience to a law which exists in its own right as demanding obedience, what Immanuel Kant calls, the Categorical Imperative. It is true that by them moral conduct is regarded as governed by the cosmic law, called, the law of *Karma*, which means that good deeds bring good results and evil deeds bring evil results. Sikhism, however, raises ethical conduct to a higher and more sovereign status, and makes it as the true expression of the harmony of human personality with the Will of God. All ethical conduct, therefore, is not merely conducive to good results such as, happiness, but it is, primarily, an act of establishment of concord between the human personality and the Person of God. Since this concord is the highest end and the goal of human existence and endeavour, it is, therefore, the basic ingredient of the highest activity of man which is religion. Thus, Sikhism, while recognising that the Order of Reality which is revealed as numenon to the human experience is not identical with the category of ethical experience, it unequivocally emphasizes that the two cannot be divorced or separated and that the nature of the numenon is such that its realisation is impossible without ethical conduct.

In this way, the Sikh thought fuses the Hindu thought and the semitic tradition on the subject of ethics and religion

FREE WILL

European philosophy and theology have been much exercised over the subject of the free will, while the Hindu tradition has considered this topic as of minor importance. The explanation for this lies in their analytical understanding of the concept. In European thought, an individual is conceived of as a permanent fixed entity, basically separate from the rest of the world which is his universe. It is argued that, without freedom of will there is no moral responsibility, and if there is no moral responsibility, there can neither be guilt nor punishment, either in society, or hereafter, before the throne of God. This problem has not much troubled the Hindu mind, for two reasons. In the first place, the Hindu thought rightly considers that there is no such thing as a completely

independent and stable entity, called the individual, and secondly, the Hindu argues, and quite rightly, that if the human will is not free then what does the term 'freedom' mean? What instance shall we bring forth with which to contrast the supposed determination of the human will? Our notion of 'freedom' is unalienably derived from our own experience to which we give the name of 'will'. Whatever, therefore, we may mean by 'freedom', it is ultimately in the terms of our experience of our own will, that we give meanings to it. Thus interpreted, to say that human will is free is an axiom and a tautology. There is no meaning in the thesis that human will is not free, for 'free' is that which is like unto the human will. The trouble, however, arises when we give to the expression 'free will', a meaning which we have not derived from any deep analysis of our experience of our will, but which have been superimposed by our intellect. Thus, we like to think that, 'free will' is that power of volition of the human individual which is totally uncaused and unconditioned. A little reflection, however, will show that such a 'freedom' does not, in fact, exist and further, that if it did and could exist, it will destroy all foundations of 'moral responsibility', 'guilt' and justification for 'punishment', either here or hereafter. To begin with, there are the facts of heredity, the environment, and the sub-conscious mind. There is not much doubt that the individual is the product of his heredity, the inner mechanism of which the science of biology has partially discovered recently in the fertilized germ-cells and its genes, which make all the organic cells that make up the body, including the brain and the nervous system. This pattern we inherit from our parents and our ancestors, and it is certainly a determination of the choices that we make in our lives from time to time. New Psychology has revealed to us the sub-conscious layers of human mind as the seat of instincts, emotions, and intuitions, accumulated, for those who faithfully follow the dogma of the Church Council of Constantinople (553. A.D.), which anathematised the doctrine of transmigration, in the race pattern during evolution of millions of years or, for those who hold the doctrine of metempsychosis as fundamental, accumulated in the course of millions of previous births and rebirths of the individual. They are certainly a determinant throughout a man's life in the matter of his choice and the conduct that follows it. Again, from outside, the social environment is active in continuously influencing and moulding an individual's mind, and thereby his power of choice and conduct. These three factors, the physical, the environmental, and the hereditary, are there as a fact and their powers of influencing the human powers of choice cannot be denied. In this context, there cannot be a free will, as an uncaused and unconditioned factor which solely determines as to what choice an individual will make. But even if there were such a 'free' will, it will entail disastrous consequences for the science of ethics and the doctrine of moral responsibility. If a man's actions are not free when they can be shown to be causally chained to his character, the sum total of his heredity, past experiences and environment, then the only circumstances in which it would be proper to call a man, 'free', would be those in which he acted independently of his received character, that is, of his habits, desires, urges, and perspective on life and all the rest. But if this agent of 'free' action, is not to be identified with that which is subject to particular desires and urges, which is circumscribed by a given environmental and circumstantial set-up, which is devoid of character, motives, persistent interests and the like, then who is this agent of 'free' choice, the 'he'? Such a notion of 'free' will completely dissolve the agent of action; a person with such a 'free' will is a completely disembodied and unidentifiable entity. Such an entity can neither be blamed nor praised, nor held responsible for what it does, for it would be clearly unreasonable to hold an individual responsible for his actions if we did not think there was a causal connection between his character and his conduct. When we can show that there is no such connection, as, for instance, that an act is committed as a result of coercion, we do not normally hold him responsible. The reason is not that the one act is 'uncaused', and 'free', while the other is 'determined'. The reason lies in the *kind* of the cause, in the one case the cause lies in the character of the individual over which he has, in some sense, control, while in the other case he has no such control. As we gain new knowledge about the kinds of causes that affect conduct, we change our mind about the kinds of behaviour for which we should hold men responsible. The recent shifts of stress in the science of Penology in the modern world, and the ancient wisdom of the east and west which iterated that an individual is ultimately responsible for nothing, must be appreciated in the context of this analysis, and not in the superficial frame of reference of 'determinism' and 'free will'. "A man reaps only that what he sows in the field of *Karma*", declares the Sikh Scripture. It simultaneously asserts that, "Say, what precisely it is that an individual

can do out of his free choice ? He acteth as the God Willeth". And the *Bhagavadgita* asserts that, "God sits in the heart of every creature with the consequence that all revolve in their set courses, helplessly, tied to the wheel of *Maya*." That man is free to choose and act to some extent, and to the extent that he is so, to that extent alone he is morally responsible and subject to praise and blame, is a true statement ; that there is no such entity, and no such entity is conceivable, which is wholly 'uncaused' and 'undetermined', and further that in the ultimate analysis, the whole area of individuality can be shown to be linked to a penumbral cause or complex of causes which are supra-individual is also a true statement, and these two true statements are not self-contradictory or incompatible with each other, constitutes the Sikh doctrine on the subject.

This brings us back to our immediate experience that seems to carry its own certitude with it, that in some sense we are free, for, we have the notion of freedom as the core of this experience. Sikhism, while implicitly taking note of the three factors, and the ultimate factor out of which they stem out, which determine the powers of human choice, lays pragmatic stress on this fourth factor, perpetually present and operative in the human mind, which is the autonomous power of choice. This autonomous power of choice is the divinity in man, according to Sikhism, and it is this core around which the whole human personality is constructed. It is this central core of the human personality which is at the heart of the individual consciousness and it is, therefore, "the source of all human misery, as well as the panacea of all his ills". "How shall man demolish the pall of nescience that separates him from God ? By being in tune with the Will of God. And how shall we know the Will of God ? Nanak answers. It is embedded in the very core of human personality."

It is this autonomous power of free choice which is endowed to every human personality and by virtue of which the effects of the other three observable determining factors of human choice are interfused and, thus, the act of free human choice gives birth to a new event, which is not wholly determined, and which is not a mere combination and aggregation of all these four factors but which is a new event, unique in nature, and potentially capable of giving rise to other similar events in the future. It is this power of free choice that is included in man's heritage which has the capacity to go beyond this heritage and, thus, within the limits given, a human being is free to shape his own destiny. Nor are the other factors, his received character, the individual circumstances merely accidental and fortuitously super imposed upon the individual, for they too are the fruits of his past *Karma*, of many previous births and, thus, are self-determined, result of free choices made. When and why did an individual make the first free but wrong choice ? This question relates to the First Things, and therefore, *ezhypothesis*, the individual comprehension fails at this point for, "the son knoweth not the birth of his father".

This is the view of 'free will' in relation to the doctrine of the *Karma* which Sikhism teaches.

KARMA

The doctrine of *Karma* is not the same as the doctrine of pre-destination of the Christian theology. *Karma* is, in a sense fate, not pre-destination, for, within the limits given, and these limits constitute the *Karma* inherited from the previous births, a man is free. This *Karma* is not fate because all the time we are making our own *Karma* and determining the character of our further status and births. The doctrine of *Karma*, as understood in higher Hinduism, and as expounded in Sikhism, merely teaches that our present limitations are traceable to our acts of autonomous choice in our past lives and as such our *Karma* is a source of rewards and punishments which we must enjoy and endure. "Ignorant mind of mine, why blame God, for the good and evil of this life is verily thy own *Karma*". But this idea differs from the idea of fate, as commonly understood in European thought, inasmuch as it is not inexorable, for all the time we are making our own *Karma* within a context, the core of which is always free and autonomous.

1. *Gauri Sukhmani*, V. 2. *Bhagavadgita*, XVIII-61
3. *Haumain diragh rog hai, daru bhī is mahl -Var Asa, I.*
4. *Japa, I* 5. *Gauri Sukhmani*, V. 6. *Gauri Namdev*,

EVIL

The existence of evil is the main reason, or one of the main reasons, for the existence of religion, and the explanation of evil is a chief problem of theologies and religious philosophies. Whether it was God who created evil and whether evil is due to misuse of the gift of free will, are problems which constantly occur and recur in almost all religions of the world. The main trend of Hindu thought on this problem is that since the world itself is unreal, the existence of evil in it is not of greater concern to the individual than the world itself. A Hindu would assert that the proper course for the human soul is to seek *mukti*, liberation, or union with God, by renouncing and discarding this vain show of appearances, called the world. The Hindu thus is not very much concerned to prove that evil does not really exist in the world, or to explain why God allows it to exist. Since the world itself is no more than a phantom and an insubstantial dream, the evil itself cannot be of a more enduring substance, and, at any rate, it is of no direct concern to the man of religion. Sikhism cannot and, therefore, does not adopt this view, because Sikhism does not accept the ultimate dichotomy of the matter and the spirit and does not accept as an independent entity, the principle of illusion, *i.e.*, the *Maya*. Since Sikhism postulates that religious activity must be practised in the socio-political context of the world, the problem of evil to it is a very much real problem, as it is to the European thinker. Sikhism, therefore, returns almost the same answer to the problem of evil which the European pantheist gives, namely, that since God is all things and in all things, the evil is only something which is a partial view of the whole, something which appears as such when not seen from the due perspective. Sikhism asserts that there is no such thing as the principle of evil, as some theologies postulate, although there are things in this world which are evil. This anti-thesis of evil and good, according to Sikhism, is a necessary characteristic of the process of involution which the spirit is undergoing in the process of creation of the world. Evil and good appear at one stage of this involution-cum-evolution and they disappear when the process of evolution culminates into the unitive experience of God, just as the white ray of light splits into its variegated spectrum while passing through a prism, and again gathers these multichromatic hues into its all-absorbing whiteness, when it becomes itself again. This explanation and statement of the doctrine of evil is laid down in almost as many words in the *Sukhmani* of the Fifth Nanak, and also at numerous other places in the Sikh Scripture. "When a complete perspective is granted to man, by the grace of God, all evil is seen to melt into its primal source, which is All-Good!" "There is no independent principle of evil in the universe because God is All Good and nothing, that proceeds from All-Good, can be really evil, and there is naught which proceeds from ought but God!"

NUMENON AND SANSAR, OR THE REALITY AND APPEARANCE

Sansar is the principle of change, which determines the world of phenomena, and in Hindu thought and in many other systems of metaphysics, it has been argued that on this account it is un-real. It is presumed as axiomatic that the real must not be infected with change. The basic theological formula of Sikhism, with which the Sikh Scripture opens, is proceeded by the exegetic statement that, "all change, all evolution, all that is characterised by the time-process, is ultimately real". The numenon, the Order of Reality, which is revealed to the human mind through gnosis, therefore, is not something which is fundamentally different and away from the phenomenon. That what is altered in the gnosis is not that what really is, but it is the mode of perception and the quality of *prehension* of the individual, which is transformed, thus revealing the vision of the numenon. It is this very mundane and the material world and the phenomena which is freshly and differently prehendend and cognised by the human consciousness, when it is enlarged and purified. Sikhism, therefore, is in agreement with the aphorism of the great Buddhist philosopher, Buddhagosa, who declared, that, "*Yas-sansaras tan-nirvanam*", that is, "the Flux and the Absolute are the same". This world of fleeting appearances that you see, is, in fact, the true face of God and as such it is revealed to the consciousness of the emancipated man!"

1 *Jusal bujhal tusal sabh bhals*—Gauri Sukhmani, V

2 *Is te hoe so nahi bura, oral kahahu kinal kachhu kara*—Sukhmani, 23-7

3 *Japu, I* 4 *Ramkali, Anand, III*

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF SIKHISM

The life story of Guru Nanak, called the *Janamsakhi*, the earliest written record we have of the travels and wanderings of the Guru, records that Guru Nanak summed up the Sikh tenets wherever he went, in the following triple precept:—

Kirat karo, Wand chhako, Nam japo.

It means, thou shalt earn thy livelihood by honest creative labour, thou shalt share the fruits of thy labour with thy fellow beings, and, thou shalt practise the Discipline of the Name.

These are rightly regarded as the basic commandments of Sikhism.

We have already explained, in brief, the implications and consequences of the discipline of the Name and its import for the man of religion. This discipline of the Name, a new synthesized and integrated *Yoga*, is to be practised in the context of socio-political life, in which man does not turn his back on the society, and does not renounce the world. The first two precepts, that of honest productive work, and sharing of its fruits with fellow beings, are to constitute the foundation of the Sikh society, while the remaining third is to vitalise and regenerate it.

Sikhism envisages a time, almost within sight now, when the local heritages of the different historic nations, civilisations, peoples, and religions will have coalesced into a common heritage of the whole human family, and Sikhism further declares that neither the natural sciences, nor philosophical intellectual speculations, which integrate the basic concepts of natural sciences into philosophy and metaphysics, can rescue man from his state of inherent limitation and suffering, and that the religious discipline of the Name alone can do it. Guru Nanak says that,

"Even if a hundred moons arise and a thousand suns shine, all this light combined cannot dispel the senescence with which man is afflicted and which the light of God, that is the religion, alone can dispel and destroy". (*Var Asa, I*).

The words, 'sun', and 'moon', have been used in this text by the Guru in the idiom which has been set by the Veda, for the Veda's imprint upon Hindu Aryan mind is permanent and unmistakable, even on those who represent a reaction against Vedism. Vedism is not only a religion, it is even more a technique, a technique of learned theologians and inspired poets, *ṛishis*, "the quivering ones", and it constitutes also the *Mīmāṃsā*, the jurisprudence of the *ṛishis*, the ritual art. Vedism has also developed a number of secular disciplines, such as phonetics, grammar, astronomy, and even rudiments of geometry and law. *Nighantu* is the oldest lexicon in any Indo-European language and in the *Nighantu* the words are grouped as series of synonyms. These synonyms, as arranged in the *Nighantu* are, as a rule, secondary metaphysical acceptations, constituted and arrived at in accordance with the laws of occult equivalences. In the Veda, the words employed are multivocal, polysignificant, and that is why the Vedic idiom is described as *vabroti*, 'crooked', and for this reason the *Nirukta* commentary says that, *prabho kamahā devah*, the gods are in love with the cryptic. It is in this sense that the Rig Veda declares that "the moon took birth in the mind and the sun in the eyes (of the Cosmic Man)". The metaphysical correlation and occult equivalence of 'moon', then, is mind and that of 'sun', the physical perception, the 'eye'. In the text of Guru Nanak just quoted, the expression 'moon' signifies the integrating speculations of the mind, which result in philosophy, based on the stuff of the basic concepts and hypotheses of the natural sciences. Likewise, the term 'sun' here means the objective natural sciences, the knowledge of which is derived through the sensory motor perceptions and, thus, the text under reference refers to the natural sciences and the systems of metaphysics, as it has been explained above.

In the semetic Judaic religions, the religion is equated with the law, which is reduced into dead letters of utilitarian ethics. Sikhism emphasises that the ethical law is not religion *per se*, that the core of the religion is the numenon, sacredness in the sense of non-moral holiness as a category of value, and a state of mind and a spiritual experience, peculiar to religion, but that the ethical law is, in some intimate sense, a necessary adjunct of religious life and a penumbra of the religious experience. It, therefore, insists on these three precepts as necessary ingredients of the life of man who would practise religion.

To begin with, therefore, in the society which Sikhism recommends as the pattern for the global society, every individual must engage himself in honest creative labour. Parasitism, in any shape or form, is not only anti-social, but anti-religious also. Secondly, these precepts of Sikhism ensure that there shall be no exploitation of man by man with capital, that is, the accumulated wealth shall not be employed as an instrument of exploitation. This is a necessary implication of the precept that, the religious man must share the fruits of his labour with his fellow creatures. From this it follows, that Sikhism regards a co-operative society as the only truly religious society.

How is this Sikh co-operative society distinguished from the modern concepts of a socialist society, a welfare society, and a communist society?

The basic element which distinguishes a Sikh co-operative society from all these modern social concepts is grounded in the Sikh concept of the world as the very "form of God," *Harika rup*, and the status of the individual as the very microcosmos of God, *Jotisarp*, and an individual, therefore, must never be imposed upon or coerced. "If thou wouldst seek God, demolish not the heart of any individual", is a text in the Sikh Scripture. The Tenth Nanak, in one of his hymns, addressing God, says, that, "I pray to you, God, for this purpose, so that I may be imposed upon by no authority external to myself".¹ Herein lies that which essentially distinguishes a religious co-operative society as conceived by Sikhism, from the modern societies that are grounded in the doctrines of socialism, communism and welfarism

It sentimentiously declares that "God Almighty alone is the undisputed King competent to rule over men; all mortals who claim the right to do so are false pretenders".² While Sikhism is in sympathy with most of the ideas with which it is sought to justify the ideals of these social theories, and in fact maintains that the ideal Sikh society shall be based on these ideas, it is out of sympathy with the evolution and growth of any apparatus which enables a class of men to exploit an individual to suppress and subjugate him in the name of abolishing the exploitation of man by man

It, therefore, follows that while Sikhism seeks to establish a social pattern, and eventually a global society in which the socialist ideas of individual welfare, equality and freedom shall have full application, it is opposed to any development which, in practice and reality, seeks to curtail and destroy the worth and inner autonomy of the individual. It is for this reason, that Sikhism conceives of the religious evolution of man as a necessary and integral pre-requisite and condition of its march towards the ideal Society.

Sikhism warns against the fallacy out of which this dilemma arises, and it uncompromisingly opposes all theories and practices which seek to build a fully happy and prosperous society on merely secular bases

A possible mis-conception about the Sikh notions on the subject must be removed here. The ideal Sikh Society is not a religious or church state, or a theocratic organisation. A religious state is based on the assumption that unity of religion is, more or less, necessary in order to secure national unity and strength, and in order to maintain order and social harmony. The terrible life and death struggle into which the Sikhs were pushed by the Mughal emperors, informed and guided by the doctrines of the political Islam, as expounded by the *Mujaddid*, resulted precisely from this assumption of Islamic polity. The wars of religion, and the prolonged periods of bloodshed which have disfigured the history of Europe for hundreds of years, are also seen to be the necessary

1. *Sloka, Farid.* 2. *Aur Sikh hon apne Ni man kau.—Dasamgranth, Akal Ustak.*
3. *Kol Hart saman nahi Raja—Bhawal, I.*

concomitants of this assumption. The peace of Augsburg in 1555, concluded to end wars of religion in Europe, on the principle, *cuius regio eius religio*, that is, that every subject must accept the religion of his ruler, is precisely the principle which animated and sustained emperor Aurangzeb throughout his long and eventful reign. The subconscious traces of this assumption still linger in the India of today to which alone certain recent developments in the body politic of the country can ultimately be traced. Similarly, a theocratic state is based on the presumption that the rulers are answerable, not for the welfare of the bodies of their subjects, but for the salvation of their souls, and that the end of all political endeavour is not in this world but the next. Sikhism considers these assumptions as unwarranted, for, it believes that, there lies a fundamental and higher unity in all true religions which are apparently diverse and that, therefore, the social harmony and the national unity of a state must be founded on this fundamental unity and not wholesale conformity. The Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, has laid it down that, "The temple and the mosque, the worship of God by the Aryans and the prayers to Him of the Semetics, are fundamentally the same!". Sikhism thus postulates that it is the duty of an organised religion, which postulate is an article of creed in Sikhism, not only to acquiesce in the provision of liberty of conscience to non-Sikhs, but also to defend the right to such liberty, of those whose conscience moves them in a seemingly different direction. For achieving enduring agreement and unity, the order of the Khalsa relies upon the methods of enlightenment and persuasion, in place of coercion and brain-washing, while recognising all the while that though the Truth is one, the roads to it are many, and therefore the Sikhs pray that, "Let all be saved through whatever path that can save them". Sikhism generally endorses the view of the medieval saint that, "the heart of so great a mystery cannot ever be reached by following one road only".

These, broadly, are the social implications of Sikhism, in the context of the modern political world situation and thought.

IV

CONCLUSION

In the year 1960, we are at a stage of world history in which not only the distance has been annihilated but other walls such as those of language, history, tradition, that separate peoples and nations from each other, have also been considerably lowered. The different living religions, therefore, are now in a position to look at each other with the eyes of comparison and to find as to in what points they fundamentally differ from their contemporaries, in the matter of doctrine and religious experience. This task of comparison entails re-assessment of the ancestral heritage of each religion and this process of re-assessment is by far the most hopeful sign which promises the emergence of a world Religion and a world Society, which is the dream of Sikhism.

To distinguish Sikhism from the other higher and world religions, therefore, it is necessary to point out the broad points of agreement between Sikhism and the other religions, as well as the points of difference.

It is a common postulate of all higher religions of mankind that there is a spiritual presence which mysteriously sustains the universe of phenomena, and that it is this spiritual presence which is absolutely real. In this postulate, Sikhism agrees with the higher living religions of the world, such as, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

Another postulate of these higher religions is that, man finds himself not only in need of arriving at an awareness of this absolute reality, but also to be in communion with it, in touch with it. There is a basic urge in man which demands that unless this is done, he cannot feel himself at home in the world in which he finds himself born and living.

This is an implicit postulate of all the aforementioned higher and living religions and Sikhism is in agreement with them in accepting this postulate.

1. *Dasmgranth—Akot Usat*

2. *Var Bilawal, III.*

3. *Quintus Aurelius, in Controversy with St. Ambrose.*

With regard to the nature of this spiritual presence, which lies behind and sustains the world of phenomena, it is agreed by all these higher living religions that it is not contained in, and is greater than either some of the phenomena or the sum total of the phenomena, including the man himself

Sikhism agrees with this

All these great religions agree with each other in asserting that the nature of this absolute reality, which lies behind and sustains the phenomena, has an aspect which is neuter and which is impersonal. The *nirvana* of the Buddhism and *parabrahma* of Hinduism, and the experience of the mystics of Islam and Christianity, affirm this aspect and characteristic of absolute reality. But they further agree that this absolute reality has also a personal aspect. The *Mahayana* Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are all agreed that the absolute reality has a face which is personal, in the sense in which a human being is a person, and that human beings encounter this personal face of the absolute reality in the same sense in which one individual human being encounters another. What precisely this personal aspect is, whether it periodically manifests itself in the form of an *avatar*, a *divine* descent, or it has manifested itself only once-for-all-time and in a unique *incarnation*, is not universally agreed. But all these great living religions agree that the spiritual presence which permeates and sustains the world of phenomena has a personal aspect. *Mahayana* declares that this personal aspect of absolute reality manifests itself in the *bodhisattavas* and is plural. For Hinduism and for Christianity this personal aspect is triune, *i.e.*, it assumes the form of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; or the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. In Islam this personal aspect is deemed as singular in the form of God, the Allah.

In this matter, Sikhism, while accepting that the personal aspect of the absolute reality is singular, declares this Person to be the Universal Mind of which all other finite minds are but emanations. These finite minds are at each moment one with the universal Mind, the essence of their finitude being eliminative and not productive. That what makes a mind finite and distinguished from the universal Mind is, what has been eliminated out of it, and not what has been produced by it. It is this universal Mind which Sikhism holds as the absolute Reality, and it is from this doctrine that the basic teachings of Sikhism, which essentially aim at the destruction of the self-centredness of the individual mind, arise.

Thus, although Sikhism is largely in agreement with the basic postulates of the great living religions of the world, it has its points of distinction which are not less important and which when translated into action, *i.e.*, into the counsel which it gives to mankind to attain its highest destiny, lead to practices and consequences which not only mark Sikhism from the other great religions but also make it of peculiar interest to the modern man.

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